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SUBJECT: THE KING CALLS FOR TURNING TO THE FUTURE

REF: RABAT 00024

¶1. This cable is sensitive but unclassified. Please treat accordingly.

¶2. (U) King Mohammed VI delivered a televised speech to the Moroccan nation on January 6, following midday prayers. The five-minute speech was announced in the press the previous day to maximize interest. In attendance were the Prime Minister, the speakers of Parliament, cabinet members, senior military officers, leaders of political parties and trade unions, members of the Consultative Council for Human Rights (CCDH), members of the Equity and Reconciliation Commission (IER), and, most unusually, family members of some human rights victims identified by the IER.

¶3. (SBU) A target audience for the King's speech was Moroccan youth. According to Maghreb Arabe Presse (MAP), the official press agency, the King stressed that "it is high time we turned to the present and the future of our sons" by being "committed to hard work, by pursuing the (same) sacrifices made by the generations of independence and the Green March eras (Note: a reference to King Hassan II's inspired march to claim the Western Sahara thirty years ago. End Note.), and by forging ahead with a broad-based reform process, boosted by the resolve and enthusiasm of our youth."

¶4. (U) The King reaffirmed his orders to publish the IER's final report, along with the country's human development achievements and future potential. He emphasized that the first fifty years of independence, i.e., 1956 to the present, provide lessons that "will shield our country from a repetition of what happened, and enable it to make up for what was lost." (Note: The King was referring in part to the gross human rights abuses documented by the IER's final report. End Note.)

¶5. (U) In no way allowing his father to be the scapegoat for any past mistakes, the King referred to Hassan II's "groundbreaking" process in the 1990s which set the stage for the IER. He applauded the IER's work and charged the Consultative Council on Human Rights (CCDH) to implement the IER's recommendations in order to support "my determination to promote the pursuit of truth, justice and reconciliation." Importantly, the King defined reconciliation not as putting the past "behind us" but rather as "collective forgiveness."

This "collective forgiveness" will "bolster the in-depth institutional reform under way, one that should enable our country to free itself from the blemishes of past civil and political rights abuses." This would pave the way for "the second fifty-year post-independence period, and focus on the hard, decisive mission of promoting the economic, social and cultural rights of all Moroccans, especially those who suffer from poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and marginalization."

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The key words in the King's speech are "collective forgiveness," and the King sets the issue firmly within the Quran, sprinkling scriptural allusions where appropriate. He has deliberately set the IER in the context of Morocco's development and evolution, as though to say mistakes were made but the future is bright if the people join together to focus on the challenges ahead. This approach of exhorting the people to action is in line with many of his recent speeches, whether the target audience was political parties, civic organizations, or youth. He directly asks the elite to "resume their role in guiding the nation." The King clearly wants the citizenry to support and participate in the reforms which can alleviate, if not eradicate, the problems facing Morocco. By linking the IER's final recommendations with the comprehensive study of the last fifty years of development and emphasizing a vision of the future, the King has asked Moroccans to become full, participating citizens of their country, challenging them to take action in a constructive manner. End Comment.

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